



Office of the Board of Commissioners  
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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 8, 2014**

### **Dedicated Veterans Millage Moves Forward for Consideration**

**Grand Rapids, MI** – The Kent County Board of Commissioners Millage Subcommittee unanimously agreed this morning to forward a Dedicated Veterans Millage Request to its Finance and Physical Resources Committee for consideration. Subcommittee members are Dick VanderMolen (Chair), Dave Bulkowski, Roger Morgan, Shana Shroll, and Ted Vonk.

“Since the creation of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, we have continued to see significant growth in service needs,” noted Paul Potter, Chair of the County’s Veterans Affairs Committee, and a Vietnam Veteran. “We all know the facts: Kent County has the fourth-largest veterans’ population of any county in Michigan, yet we are 50<sup>th</sup> of 83 counties in federal dollars awarded. And Michigan continually ranks near dead last in the States and US Territories. This proposal will start to assist us in closing these gaps.”

The proposal calls for a vote in November’s General Election on a .050 mill Dedicated Veterans Millage. If passed, the millage would generate slightly over \$1 million for increased outreach and emergency services and a more than doubling of federal claims assistance hours available.

Right now, Kent County spends \$8 per veteran, while its next-closest peer, Oakland County, spends over three times that at \$27 and Livingston County spends almost eight times as much at \$55 per veteran. If the dedicated millage were passed, Kent County would spend approximately \$36 per veteran.

The Kent County Department of Veterans’ Affairs has been dedicated to serving our veterans according to Theresa Robinson of the United Veterans Council of Kent County. “For every Kent County funded Veterans Services Officer, there has been a return of approximately \$974,000 in federal benefits annually, which are reinvested in the community in the form of groceries, gas, clothes, and miscellaneous services. This is an amazing 2310% Return on Investment (ROI) of the County General Funds.”

“Since the Department’s creation to April 1 of this year, it has helped secure over \$15.5 million for local disabled veterans,” Potter added.

“This has been a very good process. We studied veterans’ needs through the subcommittee led by Commissioner Shroll. We met an initial need through last year’s budget, and now are proposing a longer-term solution for consideration,” commented Dick VanderMolen, Millage Subcommittee Chair. “We are on the right path.”

The next step is for the proposal is to be considered at the County Commissions’ Finance Meeting on Tuesday, May 20. That meeting begins at 8:30 a.m. in the Board’s Chamber at 300 Monroe NW, Grand Rapids.

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